

## Content Hygiene (Your Most Overlooked Marketing Process)

# TAL .006

**Sent 23 February 2023**

Today's letter has a few different steps. It's about implementing content hygiene – the most overlooked part of most content strategies.

I'm going to show you how to do things like set up a content base, create a content map, and run a content audit.

# 1. The Problem

Many marketers treat content like a finite resource with a three-stage lifecycle.

They develop, deliver and distribute – and that's it.

But (most) textual content is actually an asset, not a resource.

Properly maintained, it can keep delivering strong returns for years.

Neglected, it's a waste of budget – and can even impact your website's SEO by burning [crawl budget](#), [diluting topical authority](#), and affecting your [helpful content classification](#).

# 2. The Solution

Instead of neglecting your content portfolio, invest in content hygiene.

Content hygiene helps you evaluate the effectiveness of your content (both at an asset level and in aggregate) through regular reviews and ongoing maintenance.

It also helps you keep track of what content you have and how it's connected, which supports other marketing activities like SEO.

The most important content hygiene tool is a database to track individual assets and schedule review dates. A visual content map is also helpful.

To evaluate effectiveness, you'll need access to relevant success metrics – for SEO content, for example, you might look at leading indicators like rankings, impressions and traffic.

In addition to fixing style/grammar errors and updating things like outdated statistics and old messaging or campaigns, each review should assess whether the asset in question is 'chaff' or 'kernel' content.

Chaff content = content that is not supporting your chosen marketing outcomes

Kernel content = content that is supporting those outcomes

Use the success metrics you identified earlier to place each asset in one of the six following categories:

- No Action Required. This is kernel content that is performing well. You don't need to make any changes.
- Update. This is kernel content that is performing well but requires minor freshness/grammatical updates.
- Expand/Optimise. This is chaff content that requires additional information and/or on-page optimisation to become kernel content.
- Rewrite. This is chaff content that isn't usable in its current form. While the idea behind it is viable, it needs to be rewritten.
- Consolidate. This is chaff content containing useful information that would be more effective in another existing asset. The relevant information should be migrated, then the chaff asset should be deleted and permanently redirected.
- Delete and Redirect. This is chaff content that is no longer relevant (for example, supporting a service that is no longer offered). Delete it and [301 redirect](#) it to a related page or, if no related page exists, [410](#) it.

Then action those categories as needed.

## 2. Implementation

Tech Needed:

1. A spreadsheet tool like Airtable, Excel, or Google Sheets
2. A visual sitemap tool like Octopus.do

Ease of Uptake: Very Hard

**For your main content base:**

1. Create a cloud-based spreadsheet with a 'content base' tab/table.

2. Include columns that cover things like 'Asset Name', 'Assigned To', 'Publication Status', 'Project Code', 'Content Type', 'Topic Cluster', 'Publication Date', 'Published URL', 'Last Completed Revision', 'Changes Required', and 'Next Scheduled Revision'.
  - a. Note: I recommend making 'Publication Status' a dropdown with options such as 'Approved for Planning', 'Ready for Writing', 'Ready for Marketing Review', 'Ready for SME Review', 'Ready for Edits to Be Implemented', 'Ready for Publication', 'Ready for Distribution', 'Live', 'Live With Changes Required', and 'On Hold'.
3. If you want to use your content base to track content from development to delivery (which can be helpful), you can include columns for 'Brief', 'Keyword Research', 'Visual Assets', and various versions and revisions.
4. If you're already using project management software to track delivery, you can integrate your content base with that software using native integrations or Zapier.
5. Input all your existing content assets (stick to textual content for now) into the content base.
6. Input all approved concepts for upcoming assets as well.

### **For your content map:**

1. Using a visual sitemap builder, input your content assets as individual nodes and sort them into various topic clusters. For example, if you had a pillar asset about content marketing, all content marketing satellite assets would sit under that main pillar asset.
2. Indicate internal links between the asset (Octopus.do has a function for this).
3. Use different colours to indicate status (green could be live content, for example, while grey could be proposed topics).
4. You can now easily spot content gaps, identify internal linking opportunities, and make sure you're building a diversity of robust content clusters.

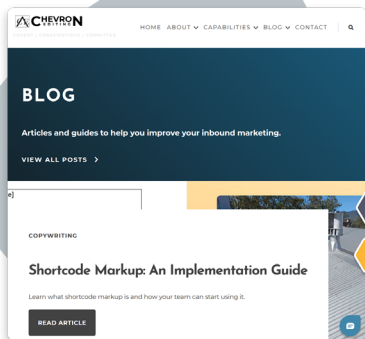
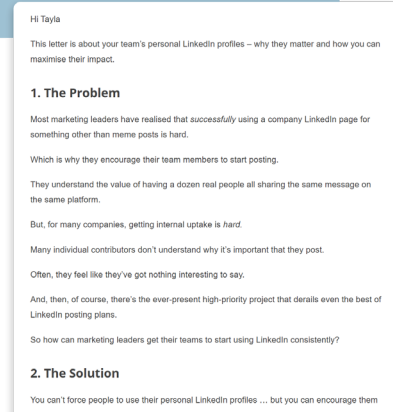
### **For content audits:**

1. Depending on your resources and content portfolio size, there are two ways to approach audits:

- a. whole-portfolio audits at fixed intervals (e.g. all content audited every six months); or
  - b. staggered audits at asset-specific intervals (e.g. each asset audited every six months from its publication date), which is more practical for most teams.
2. Create a second tab/table in the same spreadsheet by duplicating your existing table.
  3. Depending on resources and objectives, your audit will have two parts: search performance and quality.
  4. Delete the 'Last Completed Revision', 'Next Scheduled Revision', and any brief/version/visual asset columns.
  5. Create additional columns. 'Purpose', 'Average SERP Position', 'Total Impressions in Last [PERIOD]', 'Total Clicks in Last [PERIOD]', 'Total Unique Visitors in Last [PERIOD]', 'Average Time on Page', 'Recommended Actions', and 'Audit Actioned' are generally good.
  6. Depending on your spreadsheet software, you can set up an integration between Google Search Console/Google Analytics and your sheet. Data Fetcher is a useful extension for Airtable users.
  7. When you run an audit, your first pass will involve auditing the content.
  8. After assessing a content asset, choose the required action from the 'Recommended Action' column.
  9. Record any recommendations in the 'Required Changes' column.
  10. Once the audit is complete, assign the content asset to the relevant team member to action.
  11. After they've implemented the required changes, they should tick the 'Audit Actioned' box. You can set up an automation to change the 'Last Completed Review' and 'Next Schedule Review' columns in your content base table.

# Here's how to get more insights like these.

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